



Volunteerism at the Y

“I volunteer because I remember what the Y did for me as a kid.” “I volunteer because I want to help those less fortunate than me.” “I volunteer as a Y Sports coach because I want to help my kid’s team.” “I volunteer because I want to see the New Y get built.”

Those are some of the typical reasons people volunteer at the Grand Traverse Bay YMCA. According to the US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, one in four Americans age 16 and older volunteered an average of 52 hours last year, and 548,926 of those volunteered at one of the 2,687 YMCAs.

How many ways are there to volunteer at your local Y? Coach basketball, Pop Warner Football, or lacrosse; rock babies or read to toddlers at the New Y Day Care Center, chaperone teen dances, become a board or committee member, run fitness classes, or coach soccer - with 65 program offerings, the YMCA has volunteer service opportunities available for everyone.

In 2010, 359 area residents availed themselves of those opportunities, donating a total of 28,349 hours to the Grand Traverse Bay YMCA. CEO Tom Van Deinse explains, “Because we have so many programs, we utilize three times the number of volunteers of a typical Y. If we had to pay for those services, there’s no way we could continue to function the way we do now.” He adds, “In the last decade, we’ve received over \$5.7 million worth of volunteer services, according to a report by the Independent Sector. In 2010, volunteer services equaled 33% of our entire operating budget.”

Y Sports coaches make up the bulk of volunteers at the Y, and most of them are adults, but a number of kids help out as well. The YMCA will be honoring these volunteers, kids and adults alike, at its upcoming Annual Meeting/Volunteer Awards Banquet on March 3.

Volunteers are living proof that a community “owns” its YMCA and supports the Y’s charitable mission. The Grand Traverse Bay YMCA is a place to belong to, an association, and not just a place to buy services. It’s not just a membership, it’s the YMCA!

Greg Sherwin agrees. He was named 2009 YMCA Program Volunteer of the Year. "I help out with the Pop Warner Football program because I like the Y's focus not just on football, but on youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Besides, if I didn't help out, what would 2,000 Pop Warner kids be doing? Volunteering is a great way to help the whole community, and it's a lot of fun, too."

For more information on volunteering at the Y, call Volunteer Coordinator Dave Eitland at 933-YMCA or visit www.gtbayymca.org.